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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 WARSAW 000504

SIPDIS

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SECDEF FOR ISP  
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SUBJECT: POLAND MOVES TO ACCELERATES MILITARY MODERNIZATION

REF: WARSAW 497

1. SUMMARY: Polish President Lech Kaczynski and Defense Minister (DefMin) Sikorski announced their shared intention to accelerate modernization of the Polish military at a press conference following the annual meeting of Defense Ministry and Armed Forces leadership on March 13. Their plan includes increased defense spending as well as continued engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan. Kaczynski and Sikorski also addressed reporters' questions on military intelligence reform and Poland's possible participation in the U.S. Missile Defense system. President Kaczynski's strong endorsement of a modern, robust national defense, ready to operate with allies abroad, challenges DefMin Sikorski and the Polish defense establishment to move forward with defense transformation.  
END SUMMARY.

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Defense Meeting Resolved to Accelerate Modernization  
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2. The annual meeting of Defense Ministry and Armed Forces leadership on March 13 was closed to the press, but President Lech Kaczynski and DefMin Sikorski briefed the media afterwards. Meeting participants included: Senate Speaker Bogdan Borusewicz; Interior Minister (and Deputy PM) Ludwik Dorn; Chief of the General Staff LtGen Franciszek Gagor; the three service chiefs (Army, Navy and Air Force) and others. The group reviewed their progress toward the goals of 2005 and outlined new objectives for the future. In summary, Kaczynski described the condition of the Polish Armed Forces as "satisfactory." On that point, he emphasized that further strengthening of Poland's military would enhance the nation's standing in Europe and the world.

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Path to Modernization: Spending and Deployments  
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3. Kaczynski announced his intention to accelerate military modernization by increasing expenditures on modern armaments. In support of this goal, DefMin Sikorski announced the government's plan to submit a bill to parliament that would peg defense spending at 2% of the subsequent year's projected GDP vice the current practice of spending 1.95% of the previous year's GDP. Even with a conservative projection of 3% Polish GDP growth annually, this change would amount to an 8.8% jump in defense spending if enacted.

4. Kaczynski underscored the value of stabilization missions, including those in Iraq and Afghanistan, to Poland and the world. In his view, these missions enhance Poland's international prestige while improving the combat capabilities of Polish troops. The President recalled that Poland will complete its current mission in Iraq in 2006, but he did not exclude the possibility of extending into 2007 under "appropriate circumstances." He went on to mention Poland's "very serious obligations" in Afghanistan in 2007. (NOTE: Though the extent and nature of Polish participation in the ISAF command structure in 2007 remains unclear, the GOP has already signaled its willingness to join a Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan, in addition to its ISAF role.)

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Press Queries on Intel Reform and Missile Defense  
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5. Asked by reporters about the future of the Military Information Services (WSI), Kaczynski and Sikorski revealed details of legislation to be submitted later on March 13 on WSI reform. As reported reftel, this legislation would abolish WSI June 30, and create two new military structures - one external for intelligence and one for counterintelligence - as of July 1. According to Kaczynski, Sikorski as DefMin would exercise day-to-day supervision of the new services but the Minister-Coordinator for Special Services, Zbigniew Wassermann, would have full access to information gathered by the services (similar to the U.S. DNI relationship with DIA). Although WSI has been exclusively staffed by military personnel, Sikorski noted that the proposed legislation would

welcome civilian employees into the two new services.

16. In response to a reporter's question about potential Polish participation in a global U.S. missile defense system, President Kaczynski made two points. First, he noted that Poland must receive an official proposal on Missile Defense from Washington before making any decision. Second, he emphasized that the whole issue of Missile Defense had enormous political and strategic implications, which the GOP would have to consider carefully before making its decision.

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Kaczynski Has Reaffirmed Nationalistic Perspective  
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17. COMMENT: President Kaczynski's statements at the March 13 press conference reaffirmed his oft expressed patriotism and reinforced the impression that he, and his Law and Justice (PiS) party, believe that a strong, modern military is a key component of international influence. He eschewed some of the more inward looking rhetoric he has occasionally used. By publicly expressing the political will to move forward on effective defense transformation, Kaczynski has left Sikorski's MOD and the Polish military leadership with the challenge of implementing this vision. END COMMENT.  
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